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ABSTRACT

The paper describes Newberry Library's McNickle Center, with its large collection on American Indians. It examines the relationship between the library and college teachers of Native American history. Part 1 discusses the center's history, noting how it raises public awareness of Native American history and provides resources for teachers and students. Part 2 describes the program and how it teaches and reteaches history educators about Native American history. Long-term fellowships bring people to Newberry for extended periods of research and collaboration. The center brings historians together briefly for conferences and workshops. Teacher training involves publicizing fellows' activities and disseminating information from conferences. Part 3 examines reasons for the center's success. For example, Newberry does not grant degrees, it has no departments, it is very small with little hierarchy, it is not in the East, and participants do not come to be trained or tested. All activities occur in the context of a fellowship program that brings Indian people (without the Ph.D.) to the library briefly if they need the collections, thus providing ongoing contact between scholars and Indian people. Part 4 discusses the center's shortcomings. First, the multiple programs for training and retooling teachers appear to compete with one another. Second, there is still a need to develop Indian people with degrees in the field. (SM)

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Teaching Teachers:

Scholarly Conferences, Workshops and Fellowships as Tools for Re-Tooling Instructors

Frederick E. Hoxie, The Newberry Library
for 1992 OAH Meeting, April 2, 1992,

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Because our time is limited this afternoon, I have divided my presentation into four parts: history, program, reasons for the success of our efforts, and reasons for falling short of our ambitions. In each area I will summarize the story of the McNickle Center's work in an effort to focus our attention on the relationship between the Newberry Library and college teachers of Indian history.

History

The story of the McNickle Center should be narrated on a split screen, or perhaps a screen divided into thirds. The first screen would present the tale of an independent research library with arguably the world's finest collection of books on American Indians struggling over time to make those books a resource for teachers and their students. This story is part of a broader process at work during the past 25 years of institutions attempting to connect more effectively with our society. It is related to the conviction that scholars and teachers should speak directly to human concerns

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and that institutions like ours should be responsible stewards of their collections and "good citizens" of their countries.

The second screen would present the story of public and private philanthropy during this same 25-year period. Since the founding of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, these public agencies, together with their state affiliates and other government sponsors of academic research have sought out ways to stretch conventional scholarship so that it enriches us as a people and a nation. At the same time, private foundations have increasingly seen a role for themselves as agents of academic and scholarly innovation. Despite the criticism of recent years, neither wing of the philanthropic world has become a supporter of change as an end in itself; but both have looked for ways to make what are frequently called "marginal investments" that will make a difference in training experts in an important new field or helping to examine critically an important area of common concern.

The third screen would describe the rising public awareness of and interest in Native American history, measured from the publication of Peter Farb's Man's Rise to Civilization and Dee Brown's Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee just over twenty years ago, through the dramatic political and legal events of the intervening period (the take-over of the Bureau of Indian Affairs building in 1972, the Washington fishing rights cases that dragged through the 1970s, and the emergence of powerful tribal governments in the 1980s). These events have had a non-Indian dimension--rising public awareness and curiosity--as well as an Indian one. The

latter I will sketch with two statistics. In 1976, 2,632 Native American high school students took the SAT test; in 1989 that number approached 20,000. During that same period, the number of Americans reported as Indians by the U.S. Census Bureau nearly doubled.

The McNickle Center, then, is a product of a broad series of events that have swirled about our quiet reading rooms during the past two decades. It is an epiphenomenon of recent American history.

It has also required a hell of a lot of work, as you have heard already this afternoon.

That work has involved participating in the Newberry Library's effort to make more effective use of its collections. This effort has ranged from summer institutes in quantitative history to graduate courses on women and power in the Renaissance. It has also involved working with program officers and foundation officials to identify areas where the Newberry can make a unique contribution and to devise programs that draw effectively and efficiently on our mutual resources. And finally, it has involved sailing in an exciting sea, buffeted by political and cultural crosswinds, keeping our tiny craft afloat and headed consistently towards our goal of making the Newberry's matchless collections a resource for educators and scholars.

We have steered our course with the assistance of a National Advisory Council, a group with a majority-Indian membership made up of teachers, scholars and intellectuals from around the country.

Program

Since 1972, a great deal of the Center's efforts have been focused on ways to teach--or re-teach our colleagues in the historical profession about American Indian history. In fact the principal thrust of the Center from its inception has been educational, and the principal focus of its educational programs has been high school and college history instructors, with the bulk of our attention having gone to our colleagues at the college level. (I will make some comments on that preference later on.)

Generous support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, as well as the Ford, Rockefeller, Donnelley and Mellon Foundations--and many others as well--has enabled the Center's staff to think about how best to affect what goes on in college history classrooms when the subject is Native Americans. So far the strategy has been fairly uniform and has had three parts:

First, long-term fellowships. The idea here is simple: to bring people to the Newberry for extended periods (six months or more) of research in our collections and contact with each other. Since 1973, approximately 71 people have been brought to the Center as long-term fellows. Half of them have been historians, about a third have been cultural anthropologists, and the remaining dozen have come from other fields such as folklore, linguistics, religion, music and social work. During their residence at the Library--and here I speak both as a former predoctoral fellow and as Director of the Center--fellows have generally been subjected

to two common experiences: a seminar program in which they present their own work and critique presentations by colleagues and visitors, and the "fellows' tour," a group trip to Indian communities to visit with tribal elders, educators and politicians. For a week or so, fellows spend their days talking with Indians and their evenings explaining the experience to each other. I call it group field work.

The success of our fellowship program is something I am proud to document. Thirty predoctoral fellows completed their dissertations with the assistance of a year at the Center. At least twenty-two of these fellows published those dissertations as books. Earlier this year the Chronicle of Higher Education carried a story on recent scholarship on Native Americans; it contained a list of seventeen important new books in the field. Ten of them are by former McNickle Center fellows or staff members. A third measure is this year's OAH program. As has been the case in recent years, the 1992 OAH meeting features a number of papers on Indian subjects. Seven people on this year's program--in addition to Dr. Clark and myself--are former Newberry fellows. They are David Edmunds, Peter Iverson, Richard White, Neal Salisbury, James Merrell, Rebecca Kugel and William Swagerty. (James Axtell gets an asterisk since he was not technically a McNickle Center fellow; he is a former member of our advisory council.) By reciting this list I do not intend to slight the other historians who specialize in Indians who are also on the program but are not former long-term fellows of the Center. These include Steve Crum, Thomas King, Joel

Martin, Greg Dowd, Lawrence Kelly and Peter Mancall. (most attended conferences, institutes or have used our collections.)

The second part of our teacher training program has been to bring historians together for short periods for conferences and workshops. The idea here is to expose people to recent scholarship--frequently the work of fellows and former fellows--or to introduce new questions and perspectives, and to make them aware of the Newberry's resources. Each of the conferences--there have been approximately a dozen over the past twenty years--has had a focused goal, but running through all of them has been the general objective of hooking people into the important intellectual issues alive in the field and to introducing participants to the people who are raising them. In this way we have tried to build and sustain a network of historian/teachers committed to the field of Indian history.

During the past two years, with the support of the NEH we have pursued a variation on these conferences by hosting a series of four workshops with two more scheduled for this coming summer. These three-day events have involved fewer people--25 per workshop as opposed to 150 or more at conferences--and more intensive use of the Newberry's collections. The workshops have provided participants with a more intimate experience and a chance to explore the Newberry's collections. The workshops lack the breadth of our conferences, but they have generally been more satisfying--participants get into the details of issues, and come away with materials to use in their classrooms back home.

It is difficult to estimate the total number of people who have attended conferences and workshops because so many have come to more than one. The figure is somewhat smaller than the 3,000 circulation of our newsletter, but many times larger than the number of former long-term fellows. (My guess: 1,000+) Rather than guess at a total, I would prefer to describe two or three representative individuals. Howard Ellis, for example, is a history instructor at Lorain County Community College in northern Ohio. His private own study of Indian history has been supplemented by attendance at our conferences and workshops and because of them he is able to offer his students information, materials and interpretations that are available nowhere else at his institution. Roy Wortman of Kenyon College was launched by our 1985 conference on new Indian scholarship and the curriculum into an ambitious study and curriculum development effort that culminated in a Great Lakes College Association teaching workshop which he hosted last fall. And Doris Dwyer, who offered the only college level course in Indian history in the state of Nevada when she first came to a Newberry conference eight years ago, has been sustained by subsequent meetings and contacts made there to expand both her own teaching and the awareness of her colleagues.

The final piece of the Center's teacher training effort has consisted of publicizing the activities of its fellows and disseminating the information presented in conferences with publications. There are two of these: The first is the Occasional Papers series, now in its twenty-second volume, and the second is

our newsletter, Meeting Ground, now mailed to more than 3,000 people twice a year. The Occasional Papers contain conference proceedings as well as special numbers on course outlines, Indian view of history, and the fate of nonrecognized tribes. Meeting Ground carries news of upcoming Center events, book notes, and other features aimed at classroom use (we have experimented with including an unusual document in each issue, something teachers could xerox and use with students.)

I describe these three features of our program to emphasize that re-training teachers in a field as new as Indian history requires simultaneous work several levels. fThe first level is long-term fellowships, which seem most effective when they are residential experiences that bring groups of people together. The production of new scholarship needs to occur in a setting that will encourage new ideas and will foster the creation of a network of people who begin to think of themselves as specialists in Indian history. With that identification comes publications that focus on common issues, address common questions and advance a common concern. While there are splendid scholars being trained away from our Center, it is important that a new approach to so small a field as Native American history be encouraged, criticized, and sustained by a cadre of practitioners who feel connected to one another. The common experience, then, and the network it produces is a vital part of any teacher-training effort.

At the same time, because the field is so small and so new, recent scholarship needs to be shared, examined, criticized and

disseminated. Teachers who use the new scholarship need to be in contact with the practitioners who produce it and to discuss how it fits or alters previous ideas. These assertions lead me to two asides:

First, the observation that teacher-training or re-tooling requires more than instruction in new ideas or the dissemination of new scholarship. Incorporating Indian history into the college curriculum is not like learning to operate a computer or drive a car. It is not a matter of simply filing new names and dates in an existing curriculum. The Native American past, no less than an assertive Indian community in an area like northern Wisconsin, challenges a variety of smug non-Indian assumptions: the assumption that North America was a wilderness before 1607, the assumption that American history is the story of progress, the assumption that the American narrative should move from east to west, the assumption that pluralism is a feature of twentieth century urban life. These challenges cannot get very far beyond rhetoric, however, without the scholarly base on which we can discuss and explore them--with each other and with our students. Without Manitou and Providence, for example, we can't get very far in restructuring our understanding of the social history of New England; without Cherokee Renascence (the work of someone who has never been a Newberry fellow) we can't get very far beyond Andrew Jackson as saint or psychotic; without The Sixth Grandfather, we can't get very far beyond burying our collective hearts at wounded knee. We need new books--lots of them--in order to re-tool

teachers.

My second aside flows from the first: teacher training involves more than work with teachers. Not only is there a need for more books, there is a need to have teachers---primarily college teachers who do this as part of their work anyway--become adept at developing their own resources for their classes. College instructors need to be introduced to the development of materials in this field because Indian history is not confined to a single time period or region; there is an Indian history of nearly every subject in the history curriculum. As a result, participants in our conferences are encouraged to explore the Native American dimension of whatever field they may consider their own specialty--the New Deal, the South, the Gilded Age or the history of African Americans. There are Indians as actors in each of these areas. (This is an explicit goal of our documentary workshop program.)

Some Accidental Reasons for Success

A number of accidents have helped the McNickle Center be successful. The Newberry is not a degree-granting institution. It does not have departments. It is very small and there is very little hierarchy. It is not in the East. Each of these features has contributed to the re-training of teachers. Participants in our programs do not come to be trained, tested or credentialed. Because we have no departments, interdisciplinary work is easy. There is no one with a vested interest in a single approach to things (My statistics indicate anthropologists have been in the minority--they might disagree with my tale of happy

interdisciplinary cooperation. After all, the historians have been in charge). And finally, we stand at some distance from the centers of power in the profession, so we have less of an investment in things as they are.

Another asset has been the fact that all of the activities described above have taken place in a context of another fellowship program--the Center's D'Arcy McNickle Fellowships for Native Americans. These short-term fellowships bring Indian people to the library for periods of two weeks to two months with the sole stipulation that they not have Ph.D.'s. In other words, these fellowships are for community-based Native Americans--teachers, librarians, elders, graduate students--who have a need for our collections. The McNickle fellowships have established an ongoing contact with Indian people and it has underscored the point made in our fellows' seminars--that entering this field should involve contact with real people, both in the present and in the past. That point--which is vital in a field riven with stereotypes and misperceptions--should also be a part of a teacher-training program.

Falling Short of Our Ambitions:

Two strike me as most important.

First, the multiple programs we sustain to train and re-tool teachers of American Indian history can appear to compete with one another. Fellowships have a limited clientele and a limited impact. Even if a fellowship produces a new book; it takes dozens

of new monographs to dent a textbook and dozens of texts to dent a historical truism. Conferences, on the other hand, reach hundreds and almost instantly produce volumes of transcripts and teaching materials. They are cheaper and--on the surface--more productive. Our friends at the National Endowment and the foundations assert quite logically, then, that if one had to choose, it would make sense to leave graduate training to the universities and use the Newberry for workshops, seminars and the dissemination of works presented at these activities. And in fact they have put this position into policy by declaring that fellowship programs cannot qualify for support from the Education Division of NEH. It is a logic that is difficult to counter, and so far we have been unable to persuade either the Endowment or very many foundations that investment in a fellowship program is as vital as we believe it is.

There is also a great temptation to respond to the growing demand for public education programs. A session tomorrow will examine one such program--the exhibition, "America in 1492." We are enormously proud of that project, but worried that it will be seen as a substitute for the comprehensive effort we need.

The second area of failure illustrates the difference between re-training and re-tooling in a <u>field</u>, and developing <u>people</u> in that field. There has been common agreement from the beginning that Native American history is a field so interesting, so vast, and so important, that it should be open to everyone, Indians and non-Indians alike. But there has also been an assumption that over

time a significant number of people working in the field as practicing historians would be Native Americans themselves. This has not proven to be true. These numbers are difficult, but it is my estimate that today there are no more than 50 Indian people teaching in American colleges and universities with Ph.D. degrees in history, anthropology or literature. The Ph.D. is not the be-all and end-all of scholarship, but it is an important badge of membership in our profession. Without substantial numbers of Indian graduate students and a rising number of Indian people in the professorate, it is difficult to imagine that we can sustain the growth in the field we have witnessed to date. To assert this is not to minimize the contributions of the American Indians already in our profession, but to assert simply that we need many more. Retraining and re-tooling the entire profession without altering the ratio of Indians to non-Indians in American History will have accomplished nothing beyond an extension of scholarship--it will do nothing to heal the wounds of our society, extend the missions of our institutions or broaden the efforts of our foundations and public agencies. The phenomena that produced our Center twenty years ago--public outrage, institutional self-criticism, and philanthropic creativity--will have gone--if not for naught, at least for less than we have hoped.

A final comment.

Our programs to re-train and re-tool teachers are the most important features of the Newberry Library's effort to make more effective use of its matchless collections in Indian history. Of

those programs, the crucial starting point is the production of new knowledge about the Native American past, knowledge that puts Indian people at the center of a historical narrative and which treats their traditions as multifaceted and adaptive. From that base comes scholarship that can form the basis for new texts and new classes. "Teacher training," then, cannot be viewed in isolation--it begins with what historians have always done--lonely research, writing and teaching. When we have been able to support that work, we have been effective teachers of teachers; when we have not, we have fallen short. Supporting scholars and their scholarship is therefore the only real way to re-tool and re-train our colleagues and our profession.